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Thames and Hudson

The contrasts of Coleridge

By John Bayley

JOHN BEER:
Coleridge's Poetic Intelligence
336pp. Macmillan. £8.95.MICHAEL COOKE:
The Romantic Will
272pp. Yale University Press. £10.80.SUZANNE NALBANTIAN:
The Symbol of the Soul from
Mölderlin to Yeats
200pp. Macmillan. £7.95.

We love Coleridge; we were brought up on him; but is he, in the radical sense, still alive? Academic discussions about him are as lively as ever, but that is not quite the same thing, for though several generations of English intellectuals were profoundly influenced by him, to whom does he speak, in the right true Nietzschean sense, today?

John Beer's treatment in *Coleridge's Poetic Intelligence*, beautifully perceptive and understanding as it is, virtually admits the problem. The scholarliness which has already given us so sound a book as *Coleridge the Visionary* has its limitations in the history of sensibilities and intelligences that belong to the past: no attempt to bring the rap on the neck of the postmodernist head up to date, and all the better for that. Critics today have tended to use Coleridge as Coleridge himself, often used Shakespeare to give an airing to their general views of life:

By its own mood interprets, every
Echo or mirror seeking of itself.
Thus Norman Fruman is determined to null down Coleridge according to his acceptance of Freudian diagnosis: an unhappy childhood, unacknowledged rejection of the mother, a compensatory thirst for love and friendship, together with the desire to impress and please by any and every method. William Empson's Coleridge, on the other hand, is a natural pantheist self-betrayed into belief in God, that odious concept.

For Stephen Spender, a Kierkegaardian Coleridge is one too, agonizing over the leap of faith into the dark. The method of identification can be effective with great writers who rise above it so to speak, but Coleridge is not one of them: he is too much a man of his time. The sense in which he is so is one of his many fascinations, but it means among other things that, as George Watson has pointed out, French and Imaginism now seem notions only relevantly to be related to Coleridge's own poetry, and that of his contemporaries.

One tendency of Dr Beer's book, with all its equable learning, is to demonstrate—perhaps inadvertently—that Coleridge is as much a man of the eighteenth century as Napoleon himself. His multitudinous interests are those of a savant, sanguine and vivacious, a spiritual and physical optimist, if only because so many speculations about an essentially whole and harmonious universe could be made. The letter of October 1797 to Paine, from which Dr Beer rather surprisingly does not quote, stresses how much the Coleridge world-picture was independent of the senses:

For when my eyes were closed, my mind was not less independent of the senses, and I never regarded my senses in any way as the criteria of my belief. I regulated all my creeds by my conceptions, not by my sight, even at that age. . . . I know by other ways of giving the mind a hint of the Green and the whole. Those who have been led to the same truths step by step, through the constant testimony of their senses, seem to me to want a sense which I possess. . . . the universe which I possess is but a mass of little things.

The poetry, and the spirit that shaped it, come the less depended, as Dr Beer abundantly reveals, on much more prosaic and Shakespearean kind of apprehension. On the one hand, Wordsworth might admire "the power he possessed of throwing out grand central truths from which might be evolved the most comprehensive systems"; on the other, Lamb falls naturally into

a Shakespearean image when describing the impression Coleridge made in 1816: "Tis enough to be within the whiff and wind of his genius for us not to be able to possess our souls in quiet."

Dr Beer's analysis of *The Ancient Mariner* brilliantly shows what a remarkably fragmentary poem it is, fragmentary that is by the standard of comprehensiveness and calm that Wordsworth set in "The Ruined Cottage" or even in "Peter Bell". Southey early on spotted the essential incongruity in the poem when, in the course of a highly critical anonymous review, he called it "a Dutch attempt at German sublimity".

Dr Beer is inclined to think that Coleridge "knew what he was doing", but naturally enough he does not attempt to resolve the equivocations which such "knowledge" in such a poet might mean. Instead, and more revealingly, he surrounds the poem with fruitful parallelism and speculation. The poet who at that time was preaching Unitarian sermons was also approving the spiritual autobiography of John Woolman, who describes how his first religious stirrings came from remorse at having killed an ant. Coleridge too had enough of the Shakespearean gift of delighting in an echo as in an image: slightly comic as the avian parallels become, it may indeed be relevant that he had written a few months earlier a poem called "The Raven", in which that egregious bird flies round and round cawing and rejoicing as the mariners drown, when the ship sinks that had been built of an oak tree he had planted as an acorn with his own hand.

They had taken his all, and Revenge was Sweet!

More relevant possibly is the parallel with Goethe, first pointed out by R. H. Wells. In composing *Caleb Williams*, Goethe recalled that the thought constantly uppermost in his mind was that of a man who has read it, shall one, be exactly the same man that he was before. Such a purpose would certainly have been apposite for the radical art of the time, to achieve an effect comparable with that of one of Wesley's or Whitfield's sermons. One of Dr Beer's most effective perceptions is about the way in which the mariner's persona modulates from a comparatively objective ballad-type presentation into that of Coleridge himself.

The development of the mariner's discourse is one of Coleridge's most spectacular feats. The mode by which, without the reader's being aware of inconsistency, he gradually infuses the sunken, stilted, sometimes crabbed speech of the earlier part of the poem with a lyrical utterance attuned to the workings of his own sensibility is a marvellous piece of poetic conjuring.

Dr Beer strives to weave the notorious theory of "single and double touch" into the seamless garment of Coleridgean poetic intelligence; and here it would seem he is dealing less with the protean than with the eighteenth-century scientific dilettante.

"Animal magnetism" had been all the rage in Coleridge's youth, and regarded as central to the understanding of human "excitability" and "instincts". The term "double touch" Coleridge almost certainly borrowed from Euler's *Letters to a German Princess*, where it is used of the more effective magnetizing process that resulted from applying both poles of a lodestone to the metal to be treated, instead of a single one. Coleridge characteristically turns this into a metaphysical theory about the nature of the universe, about the significance of which Dr Beer has some interesting and original speculations.

Did Coleridge mean that simple perception—touch—is not the decisive way in which we are in contact with the life of the universe? We are effectively at home in it through "double touch", the affections and instincts brought into being by the processes of growth and maturity. A child has single touch; so has the individual in a state of

to me the light it throws on his attitude to the nature of art and its place in experience, rather than on the ways in which he himself planned and fashioned a poetic topic. Coleridge's extraordinary kind of poetic intelligence got in the way of his poetry: his formal poetry that is—its much as it contributed to it, and should we not see that intelligence as best displayed throughout all his more unofficial writings—notebooks, letters and table-talk? The fascination of these, and especially the sense in them of the physicality of poetry, which the verse does not usually possess, remain the best indicator of Coleridge's sensuous powers and sympathies, which bring him so much closer to us today than do his intellectual speculations.

Michael Cooke's *The Romantic Will* and Suzanne Nalbantian's *The Symbol of the Soul* will be valuable source-books to students of ideas in nineteenth-century poetry. Both are little too academic—Suzanne Nalbantian's book is fairly obviously a recast PhD thesis—but both have interesting things to say on the significance of change of meaning in the Romantic terminology of the mind and consciousness. Michael Cooke is at his best on Blake, and is also illuminating on the will to art in Keats's poetry as an aspect of something almost like religious salvation. The strength of Dr Nalbantian's book is in its wealth of telling contexts: she compares the comparative "security" of the soul in English Romanticism, and its insurance by what Wordsworth calls "prepossession", with the ways in which in the German imagination it can be imprisoned or lost, given away or trapped in a setting wholly destructive and alien. There is no more painful metaphor for such estrangement than that in Hölderlin's *Hyperion*: "My soul is like a fish, thrown from its element up on to a sandbank, and it writhes and flings itself about until it dries up in the heat of the day."

It is ingenious, and not at all in the bad sense, to trace the soul as she does until we find it stopping at a sun-burnt in the Elysian underworld. The thousand sordid images of which your soul was constituted . . . Sitting along the bed's edge, where you curled the papers from your hair, . . .

Or clasped the yellow soles of feet in the palms of both soiled hands. It does indeed seem legitimate to connect those yellow soles with the damp soles of housemaids, and the whole metaphoric entourage of post-Laborer poetic consciousness: "O mon âme du soir, ce Londres noir qui traîne en toi!" Who here, indeed, can distinguish darkness from the soul? But apart from an occasional jeu d'esprit of this kind, both books suffer from a degree of stiffness and caution, and a disinclination to follow through, as Dr Beer has done, the implications of the kind of question their survey brings up.

The translation factor

By Andrew Field

JANE GRAYSON:
Nabokov Translated
A Comparison of Nabokov's Russian and English Prose
257pp. Oxford University Press. £5.50.

There continues to be worry for some readers in not being able to place Vladimir Nabokov in a snug cultural dovetail. Kingsley Amis has recently thrown the bird into the bush by declaring (*The Sunday Times Magazine*, April 17) that Nabokov does not write English even though "in a way peculiar to foreigners [he] never stops showing off his mastery of the language". Decades ago there were Russians still some, in fact—equally ready to affirm that Nabokov writes, however brilliantly, something which is not quite Russian. At the conclusion of her book Jane Grayson sensibly concludes that Nabokov ought not to be "fitted into any national pigeon-hole" which is true, and demonstrated by her careful argument, though doubtless Nabokov will continue to sit "like an Eagle [read] in a Dove-coat [nebulous]" for those who haven't the inclination or the patience or the languages to focus upon the problem that is Nabokov. *Nabokov Translated* is a competent essay, and it is only too bad that it cannot be of service to greater numbers of interested readers, because the author has decided against English translation of the Russian passages as something which "would have undermined the purpose of this book". It might also have introduced linguistic confusion, if not vertigo, I suppose.

Russian stands behind Nabokov's literary English—with French slightly to the side—and there is the further problem of the American language standing in front of it. Dr Grayson could have paid more attention to this important aspect, which may have psychological as well as linguistic import. There is a short section towards the end of the book which notes the introduction of Americanisms into translations as early as 1938 and has a list of representative changes from usages such as "the pictures" and "frightening" to "the movies" and "spooky" in two novels, but that is all.

Here is a relevant and exemplary tale which I heard too late for inclusion in my biography *Nabokov: His Life and Art* (1967): in his St Petersburg youth, a lad whose parents were English and Russian paid a visit with them to the Nabokov town house. And when they had sniffed out the boy, Nabokov and his younger brother

Sergei would only speak French to him. Thus, it may be that there has always been something linguistically competitive and individualistic or "American" about Nabokov's manner as well as his diction, that he writes in languages in which he called Russo-Franco-American and Americo-Russian by choice and cunning as well as chance and experience, always moving too quickly to be planned down. He has, for that matter, an idiosyncratic method of studying butters and an idiosyncratic theory and practice of translation. Even his transliteration is not the common one. Of course this manner is frequently annoying, but it is also the font of the literary surprises we call Nabokovian: simply, an important patience and skills for the former if we wish the delights of the latter.

Nabokov Translated shows patience as well as common sense, but the book in the main strives to eschew subjective judgment and speculation; it is workmanlike as a high level. I am grateful for the discovery of a dropped line in my 1973 bibliography and another careless name slip in a translation reference. (In another place Dr Grayson uses a citation from my bibliography to say, an important dating error by Nabokov in a later translation.)

There is, however, one serious omission in the failure to examine Nabokov's translation of Roland's *Colas Breugnot*, which is one of his major French translations and also important for those who know the account of his early translation and for the special problems with which it, like *Alice in Wonderland*, presented him. Other French translations are used. The changes and the explanation for those who are versions of all the reworked novels are set out at length. The migration of certain pet words is followed through many books. The evolution of Nabokov's autobiography through three versions is charted, as are the major occurrences of biographical passages in the novels. These sections are among the most valuable in the book. There is an interesting discussion of the base translations of *The Gift* and *Invitation to a Beheading* and the changes made in them by Nabokov. All of this scholarly work needed to be done; but it does not make easy sustained reading, as Dr Grayson herself allows along the way with comments such as "a full account would risk becoming repetitive and tedious", or "it is not proposed to go into any detail here about . . .". When we are told that "in all, Maria gains about a dozen images, Drayton over twenty, and Franz nearer thirty", we feel some gratitude at not having them all before us.

In the short section on style Dr Grayson offers comments on doubling and balancing pairing in Nabokov's prose. Often this stylistic

pairing becomes delightfully liminal as when the English "not to spell very well, but to smell very well" is joined by the Russian "ne stofka grammaticheskimi, skol'ko aromatischeskimi". She views this stylistic feature as of greater importance in the English. This discussion might, however, have wandered much further, for a binary pattern is evident throughout Nabokov's work. This is the reason why a strong awareness of the various linguistic acts in Nabokov's mind helps his reader more than anything else. The parallel passages may be not only in the same language, but also frequently in scattered places.

Nabokov has spoken in different texts somewhat disparagingly about first his English and then his Russian style, and has accordingly effectively neutralized one another. The remarks about Nabokov's "aberrant English" have a slightly schoolteacherly tone. There are awkwardnesses, and these are documented, but literary style all over again, and thus the two modesties of a common accepted norm, and it is particularly unfortunate to deal with Nabokov in such a way.

Nabokov Translated ends with the stirring peroration from Nabokov's afterword to the Russian *Lolita* in which he praises English for its "stores of varied knowledge and full freedom of spirit. Freedom of spirit! All the aspiration of humanity is in this combination of words". What is wonderful in this passage is Nabokov's use of the Russian word *znanie*, which means simply breathing, a nice but odd image—humanity breathing; it is only the English aspiration lurking behind it which has the dual function of breathing and striving and thus supplies the resonance and the explanation for those who are versions of all the reworked novels are set out at length. The migration of certain pet words is followed through many books. The evolution of Nabokov's autobiography through three versions is charted, as are the major occurrences of biographical passages in the novels. These sections are among the most valuable in the book. There is an interesting discussion of the base translations of *The Gift* and *Invitation to a Beheading* and the changes made in them by Nabokov. All of this scholarly work needed to be done; but it does not make easy sustained reading, as Dr Grayson herself allows along the way with comments such as "a full account would risk becoming repetitive and tedious", or "it is not proposed to go into any detail here about . . .". When we are told that "in all, Maria gains about a dozen images, Drayton over twenty, and Franz nearer thirty", we feel some gratitude at not having them all before us.

Readers of *Speak, Memory* will doubtless be startled by the role of contradictory variants Dr Grayson offers. What of factuality if the treacherous servant in *Speak, Memory* comes from quarters which smell slightly of fried fish while the same or quarter in the Russian version, *Other Stories*, smell warmly of chicken? But the sense if not the specificity of that below-stairs odour is heightened rather than

diminished by that duality, is it not? Dr Grayson offers some plausible explanations as to why certain of the émigré novels underwent greater revision than others, pointing out the correlation between the degree of revision and the nationality of the characters. Nabokov's theory of translation is accepted at its face value: "It is not proposed to enter here into a discussion of the merits or demerits of Nabokov's theory and practice of translation." The book demonstrates above all that Nabokov frequently has one translation rule for his own work and another for the work of others, which is not wholly unexpected in the larger pattern. On this point Dr Grayson shades her objectivity with permissiveness. In translating his own work, Nabokov is under no obligation to reproduce his original exactly. He is at perfect liberty to amend, to elaborate. It is curious that later, in the discussion of sexual encrustations in certain revisions, Dr Grayson takes a rather uncharitable view of the motivation behind the heightened sexuality: "It is not unreasonable to contend that in the wake of *Lolita* Nabokov has deliberately fostered his public image of the so-called 'pornographic' writer, and has accordingly increased the erotic content in his novels", to which is added in a later chapter: "It is his bold parody of pornography, his nod to modern literary fashion." One feels that this aspect of Nabokov's writing causes a certain ease of literary formation in Dr Grayson against which she struggles manfully but in vain. It is true beyond doubt that the problem of sexuality in Nabokov's writing is well set out by consideration of those later encrustations.

The factor of translation is much more intrinsically important in Nabokov's case than in the sometimes outwardly analogous translation practices of Samuel Beckett. Translation is not a key to Nabokov, but his theory and practice of translation provide good means by which to orient oneself in the strange Nabokovian world of words. Dr Grayson takes the highway, which is sensible and correct—she grounds, though some day someone must cover the same countryside by means of the more speculative and meandering public footpath.

Anglo-Irish Literature: A Review of Research, edited by Richard J. Finneran, has just been published by the Modern Language Association of America (\$50pp, \$18; paperback, \$10). The fourteen contributors deal with writers of Anglo-Irish background from the nineteenth century to the modern period: there are sections on Oscar Wilde, George Moore, Shaw, Synge, Joyce, Lady Gregory, A.E., Oliver St John Gogarty, James Stephens and Sean O'Casey.

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Princip's principles

By D. A. N. Jones

HANS KONING:
Death of a Schoolboy
187pp. Quinter, £3.95.

The novels that Hans Koning writes about the revolutionary aspirations of young students deserve more attention than they usually receive in Britain. *Death of a Schoolboy* is a historical novel, about Gavriel Princip who sparked off the First World War and almost survived it. After assassinating the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, at Sarajevo in 1914, he was sentenced to twenty years of solitary imprisonment, being too young for legal execution. He died in 1918.

Hans Koning offers persuasive conjectures about the boy's state of mind, his aspirations and principles. The book is akin to his earlier novel, *The Revolutionary*, originally published in New York in 1968 and subsequently filmed: this concerned an imaginary student rebel in an imaginary nation state, with a suggestion of Kafka, but it was relevant to the passions of the rebellious students involved in the movement against American participation in the Vietnam war. Hans Koning's novel was strongly committed to the movement, and he began signing his books and articles as Hans Koning, calling this his "movement name".

The Revolutionary illustrated the personal, psychological pressures which may turn students towards revolutionary ideals, as well as the particular evils which they may see as the cause of their protest. The main character was called A. He might exist in any decade and any nation state. Princip, in *Death of a Schoolboy*, is more of a particular case: he is a radicalist with the kind of ideals that have inspired terrorist actions recently in Cyprus and Ireland.

The author is keen to link Princip with earlier and later rebels. He writes in a preface: "I have not tried to modernise what happened to him. It may depress some people, and cheer up others, but there were indeed freedom marches of schoolboys as far back as 1913, and they were called just that." He concludes his note: "My story is not taking place in a far country, and seems to imply that Princip's story is going on all the time, everywhere. He strikes Princip a bookish boy, looking at history books and travel books for examples of tyrannical behaviour by established authorities, and for examples of rebellious deeds by revolutionary heroes."

Two years ago Koning published a lighter book about student revolutionaries, *The Peasants' Cause*, with a young couple attempting to kidnap a Fascist police chief as he travels to the Riviera, the novel suggested that "the time of the revolution is 1975". In this "entertainment" it was particularly hard to tell whether the revolutionaries were

being mocked for their bad motives or applauded for their idealism. The author himself escapes from his native Holland, where he was under Nazi occupation and he was himself a student: he served with the British Army during the Second World War. There can be little doubt that his concern for rebellious students stems from his experience.

If one looks at Koning's travel books, and the articles he has written for *The New Yorker*, one finds him expressing some of the revolutionary ideas in his novels. For instance, in his recent *A New Yorker in Egypt*, he describes himself being stared at, as soon as he leaves "the main shopping centre where the bourgeoisie saunters, in the public square, created a real stir. It would find some way of communicating by buying something or gesturing." It established a kind of contact, and they couldn't go on staring as if they wondered whether it was human. This worked in China usually, and it worked here." He expresses, like his revolutionary characters, a resentment against the wealthy, a feeling of compassion and guilt about the condition of the poor, and a desire to share the fruits of the revolution. Symbols of nationalism or religious excess, this community feeling, he likes the muzzies, as he likes church bells—and he adds: "As for synagogues, all they've ever had was beading running around and knocking in a people's name. Exactly the same remark made by Princip in *Death of a Schoolboy*: the lone boy hears the sounds of the different churches to which he does not belong—the bells of the Roman Catholics and the Orthodox, and the clock of the mosque—and only the Jews of Sarajevo keep silent. Why had the synagogue no chiming to strike the hour of Jerusalem?" He finds symbols of community—bells and flags—very desirable.

Princip is made to reflect on "the total incapacity of any man to feel another man feels—except a revolutionary man." This is a reflection occurs when the assassin is brooding upon the atrocities committed by rich men and their soldiers upon peasants and slaves. *The Revolutionary* reflects, and the clock of the mosque—and only the Jews of Sarajevo keep silent. Why had the synagogue no chiming to strike the hour of Jerusalem?" He finds symbols of community—bells and flags—very desirable.

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Sin wins

By David Nokes

MICHAEL MEWSHAW:
Earthly Bread
212pp. Secker and Warburg, £3.90.

Michael Mewshaw has a gift for depicting the intimate incongruities of modern American life. In *Walking Slave* he evolved, in a thousand tiny details, the sense of California as a living parody of itself. His new novel, *Earthly Bread*, has similar qualities. There is the same whiff of fear.

The dog greeted me by sniffing up the beam of my trousers until his growling snout was wedged in my crotch. "Don't bother about him," she said. "He won't bite."

—the same unmistakable aroma of spiritual defeat as the narrator. For it is a wilderness as one can find anywhere in the United States. The motel is inhabited only by the once a circus fat lady, who is into flower-pottery, her husband is a tinsmith, and a troupe of doleful vaudeville acts.

Someone pried himself out of a chair; I recognized the sound of rayon pants peeling away from leatherette upholstery. A fluorescent bulb in the ceiling flickered, then flashed on with dazzling force, as if a dozen men had thrown themselves to their feet, blinking, unsteady.

But in this novel, Mr Mewshaw has forgone the panorama, and concentrated instead on an intense conflict between opposing faiths. The plot is simplicity itself. For Amico has returned to America after a year in Rome recovering from a breakdown, and has been assigned to the parish of St Austin's, Texas. There, Mrs Hoover, who has joined a group of Jesus freaks, the Hoovers have hired the noted "deprogrammer" Noland Meadow to straighten out the boy's head. But Mrs Hoover would be grateful if Mr Amico could extend a Catholic influence over this procedure.

He offers an understanding of the revolutionary mentality, in general—as opposed to the mentality of more conservative, deferential people—but this understanding need have no effect on one's political attitudes and behaviour. An I.R.A. man may well be, in the same respect, the same "type" as a rebel against Hitler. General Amin; but we are still entitled to oppose the former and support the latter.

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As we see others

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Bunny blues

By Nigel Penn

IAN MCLACHLAN:
The Seventh Hexagram
278pp. Hodder and Stoughton, £3.95.

There is really only one way to talk in the European community in Hongkong and that is to shout. The circle of life is too small, the place too crowded, and the furious, industrious and greedy to allow for any decorous forms of speech. Alongside this social noise is the ambiguity of the Chinese pronouns the collective political alliance that both find satisfaction in the Hong Kong Hexagram. Ian McLachlan, who knows the colony well, tries to bring these worlds into an imagined collision.

In what ought to be, but is not, an arena of major political activity, Joe Stewart is looking for a cause, some standard, "Eastern" types, Donald Winn, the queer newspaperman who has been it all his life, and who likes Stewart, shares the same doubts about the political situation and how it might be altered. Then there is Jordan King, born in South Africa, who changed his name from Wong, could have been a brilliant medical man

What happens during the programming is the main business of the book. Fairly brief, but real conflict is not between low and the boy, but between Meadow and Amico as the two, respectively. Meadow is a victim, determined to win, but will soon think the boy's brain is a perfect specimen of autism," he claims, boasting that he will always think that. Amico is a priest on the brink of breakdown, who looks around sadly, wondering if it might be better to marry, go for a walk and teach Latin in a private school. One recognizes the type for Graham Greene's shadowy, free will, the devotee begins to some gentle trading of the determinedly gladiatorial aspect.

The arena for the deprogramming is a deserted middle of the Texas desert—as arid a wilderness as one can find anywhere in the United States. The motel is inhabited only by the once a circus fat lady, who is into flower-pottery, her husband is a tinsmith, and a troupe of doleful vaudeville acts. This bizarre setting, and the dialogue of Billie, Zack, Meah and the whores, shows Meadow's best. Yet various contrivances gradually make it apparent that the incidents must be read symbolically. The Hoovers are washed by the Hoover boy, wakes one morning to find a scorpion in his sink; the sun has ever more fiercely; Meadow's self-sufficiency begins to crack. Along with this, there is a tendency to underplay the political Halfway through the novel, Amico notes: "I recognized now what a deprogramming really was—an exorcism in which God, not Satan, was cast out," some thing most readers will already have guessed. Yet, for all that, there is considerable wit and energy in the dialectal exchanges, and, as in all the best religious works, sin is outright.

Certain non-Western peoples have gained celebrity, not because their customs or ideas are intrinsically of unusual interest, but because accounts of them have been produced by prominent academics. The Nayars, in contrast, aroused the curiosity of outsiders long before the rise of social anthropology.

Living in Kerala, on the Malabar Coast of peninsular India, they were by no means off the beaten track, and C. J. Fuller fleshes forth sources on them from the ninth to the nineteenth century; later in the 18th came Sir Richard Burton, who admired the women. The main focus of interest was undoubtedly their marriage system. Already described in essentials by the Portuguese Barbosa around 1518, and alluded to by Caméens and Montesquieu, it is this aspect of Nayar life that virtually guarantees them a mention in contemporary introductions to social anthropology.

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Looking daggers

By Richard Gregory

CLARENCE MALONEY (Editor):
The Evil Eye
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We think of eyes as windows through which we see the world. In anthropology—as it seems from the title—this book—present cultures widely spaced around the world see the eye as sometimes giving off evil forces. To Plato and to Euclid, vision worked by the eye shooting out rays of particles to touch objects like probing fingers. This had the interesting consequence that our ability to see fine detail should decrease with distance as the rays diverge. So they explained how visual power falls off with distance, in a way which to us is quite incorrect. *The Evil Eye* is not however concerned with early theories of perception. It is in the main anthropological, concerned with magic and the ways in which

people—often unwittingly—produce consequences by merely looking. The editor's own chapter describes his experience with a family of potters in an Indian village. Seeing many broken pots about the inn he asks the reason for the breakages. The younger brother answered: "All was lost last time because people looked on. This is hardwork, isn't it? So eyes shouldn't fall on it." It rained for the next few days, and when Clarence Maloney visited the potters again, there were many more broken pots. "It was not hot enough," said the elder brother. "But what about the drizzle yesterday?" "Yes, they spoiled because of the drizzle, too," but the potters' answer was that it was because of the drizzle and the eye. Whether it was the rain, the low temperature of the kiln, or the eye (they were as diplomatic about Maloney's own eyes, as big people's eyes are not human) it was a matter for serious debate. It is fascinating to realize that magic and myth still compete on equal terms with science and technology in everyday affairs of life.

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At the start of the century, thirty or forty Nayars lived together in a single household, owning a joint estate. Membership was transmitted through women and men lived with their families only visiting their partners at night. After 1920 the residential groups began to fragment, and nowadays the typical household is nuclear. Under the old order economic considerations were irrelevant in choosing a spouse, but the development of individual property has now pre-empted the social history is here treated with delicacy. We are shown how crude and unhelpful the bare formula "matrilineal-patriliny"

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The last two chapters deal with political theory and begin by contrasting three East African kingdoms (Bemba, Amhara and Buganda), continuing by examining some of the social groups of East African (Nuer, Tswana and Somali), and conclude by pointing out many of the common principles as well as differences discerned when these traditional societies are approached with one another and with the modern states which now dominate our political thought.

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Social anthropology gives us fresh vision to see the exotic as credible and coherent while at the same time seeing our own long-accepted practices and beliefs with new criticism and astonishment. It is important for shedding our customary perceptions about police punishment and hospitals as it is for making sense out of head-hunting, blood feud and spirit-mediums. Some of the more provocative and far-reaching work in anthropology during recent decades has been as much concerned with research in Western societies and cultures as with others. Professor Lewis fails to appreciate the full significance of this.

Many of the points which the author makes seem to be slightly askew, from the point of view both of fact and of interpretation. He often seems to fail to see a particular set of ethnographic accounts quite right, and his evaluation of theory and theorists often falls flat. Space allows me to provide only a few separate examples.

First, the debate about the primacy of ritual over myth or vice versa may be unresolvable, but it is certainly not "stereotyped" theoretically or methodologically. Brilliant analysts, from Robertson Smith to Edmund Leach (both, incidentally, inclined towards ritual over myth), have demonstrated otherwise. Second, in discussing the profound social changes undergone by

connections made are those of "complex interrelationships that create feedback loops" rather than those which might be made by the intellect or sympathies of the Sebel themselves, one section of *Culture and Behaviour of the Sebel* is blithely entitled "Homo Economicus Sebelensis"; in spite of evidence to the contrary we are assured that among the Sebel material things are a measure of the worth of persons. Is an amoral individual perhaps necessarily called into being by the premises of functional sociology? What a pity that Professor Goldschmidt did not find it possible to learn Sebel, and had to rely on a variety of informants in Uganda, related to the better-known Nandi and Kipsigis of Kenya, is the main report on one of the series of studies carried out under the Culture and Ecology for East Africa Project of 1961-62, directed by the author, and partly arising from his earlier fieldwork among the Sebel. The idea of the project was to select four East African peoples, each having a level contrast in ecology and mode of subsistence, and to explore related variations in cultural and social life. In the Sebel case, the main contrast made is between those who still practise an ancient tradition of agriculture on the dry plains, and those who have settled down to an agricultural life on the higher slopes of the mountain.

The guiding notion of history—and indeed the guiding theory of social life—which shapes this book is of an unconscious, rational adjustment within traditional society to changing external circumstances. Institutions are adaptive mechanisms designed to organize social action in terms of the situational requirements in which a people must operate. Behavior, whether individual or institutionalized, is responsive to the external environment.

The older phrase "culture complex" is paraphrased by Goldschmidt as "a set of interrelated elements of standardized behavior." The present application of this old idea, in language stemming particularly from Parsons and Merton, is tried out with questionnaires administered by another of the team of investigators, on such topics as sexual anxiety and parental roles, and other paraphernalia of the "multimedia approach" (sic) including some good photographs.

There remains, however, an old-fashioned feel to this reportage. In spite of the early chapter on "Ethnography as Genre", it is difficult to understand how such a massive project could have been mounted with so little regard for the simple but basic principles of the great fieldworkers—Boas, Malinowski and Evans-Pritchard. This is perhaps why there is no sense of inner coherence to the book—the

But the material offered here has its own strength; no jargon could dim the image of the Sebel in 1962, despite the bones of their prophecies, dead and secretly buried for decades, in order to re-enter them in an anthology: thus releasing the spirits of their former prophetic leaders, so that they could enter the bodies of living men again. It is no accident that this rather pedantic ethnographic inquiry was initiated in the late colonial period, when the Sebel were at their most passive and the bones of their prophecies were lying fallow.

